

Using the Dictionary

Usage Notes

Most dictionaries contain usage notes. These notes are given within an entry or in a separate paragraph at the end of an entry. Usage notes provide information on the correct use of words. They describe the acceptable and unacceptable uses of a word, distinguish easily confused words, discuss points of grammar, and highlight issues of pronunciation. Notes are given only for words likely to cause uncertainty. Here are some examples of information provided by usage notes.

1. *Usage notes explain acceptable and unacceptable uses of a word.* Like most dictionaries, the *American Heritage Dictionary* has a Usage Panel, whose members decide whether particular usages are acceptable. Note that in the usage note below, the members of the Usage Panel do not agree about whether the usage is acceptable.

USAGE NOTE: The phrasal verb *look to* has recently developed the meaning “expect to, hope to,” as in *I’m looking to sell my car*. Probably because of its informal nature, this usage is not acceptable in writing for 52 percent of the Usage Panel.

2. *Usage notes explain the correct usage of frequently confused words.* The following note discusses the different meanings of two verbs that are often confused, *affect* and *effect*. It is found at the end of the entry for *affect*.

USAGE NOTE: *Affect*¹ and *effect* have no senses in common. As a verb *affect*¹ is most commonly used in the sense of “to influence” (*how smoking affects health*). *Effect* means “to bring about or execute”: *measures designed to effect savings*.

The usage note can help you remember the differences between the two verbs. You can check whether you have used the verbs correctly in a sentence with these substitutions.

The weather may affect (influence) our weekend plans.
We will effect (bring about) the schedule change in the fall.

3. *Usage notes explain points of grammar.* The following usage note is given at the end of the entry for *want*, when used as a verb.

USAGE NOTE: When *want* is followed immediately by an infinitive construction, it does not take *for*: *I want you to go* (not *want for you to go*). When *want* and the infinitive phrase are separated in the sentence, however, *for* is used: *What I want is for you to go*. *Want* in its meaning of “have need” normally takes *for*: *They’ll not want for anything now that they’ve inherited his estate*.

4. *Usage notes highlight possible difficulties in pronunciation.* The following usage note presents two pronunciation options for *err*. Note that the opinion of the dictionary’s usage panel is cited.

USAGE NOTE: The pronunciation (ûr) for the word *err* is traditional, but the pronunciation (ěr) has gained acceptability in recent years. The Usage Panel was split on the matter: 56 percent preferred (ûr), 34 percent preferred (ěr), and 10 percent accepted both pronunciations.

Practice

Read the dictionary entries and usage notes below. Then read the sentences in the exercise that follows. Decide whether the italicized word in each sentence is used correctly. If the word is used incorrectly, rewrite the sentence with the correct usage on the "Rewrite" line.

al·leged (ə-lējd', ə-lēj'yd) *adj.* Represented in a certain way without proof; supposed. —**al·leg'ed·ly** (ə-lēj'yd-lē) *adv.*

USAGE NOTE: In their zeal to protect the rights of the accused, newspapers and law enforcement officials sometimes misuse *alleged*. Someone arrested for murder may be only an *alleged* murderer, for example, because no charge has been proved, but is a real, not *alleged*, suspect in that his or her status as a suspect is not in doubt. Similarly, if the money from a safe is known to have been stolen, and not merely mislaid, then we may safely speak of a theft without having to qualify our description with *alleged*.

all right *adj.* **1a.** In proper or satisfactory operational or working order . . .

USAGE NOTE: *All right*, usually pronounced as if it were a single word, probably should have followed the same orthographic development as *already* and *altogether*. But despite its use by a number of reputable authors, the spelling *alright* has never been accepted as a standard variant.

a·while (ə-hwīl', ə-wīl') *adv.* For a short time

USAGE NOTE: *Awhile*, an adverb, is never preceded by a preposition, such as *for*, but the two-word form *a while* may be preceded by a preposition. In writing each of the following is acceptable: *stay awhile*; *stay for a while*; *stay a while* (but not *stay for awhile*).

per·cent·age (pər-sen'tij) *n.* **1a.** A fraction or ratio with 100 understood to be the denominator . . .

USAGE NOTE: *Percentage*, when preceded by *the*, takes a singular verb: *The percentage of unskilled workers is small*. When preceded by *a*, it takes either a singular or plural verb, depending on the number of the noun in the prepositional phrase that follows: *A small percentage of the workers are unskilled*. *A large percentage of the crop has spoiled*.

1. The *percentage* of unsatisfied people are small.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

2. Please practice for *a while* longer.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

3. The *alleged* thief has been taken into custody.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

4. It's *alright* if you want to take some time off.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

5. A small *percentage* of students want to skip the ceremony.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

6. After playing *awhile*, the students went home.

Correct or incorrect? _____

Rewrite _____

Reading and Reasoning

Three Types of Context Clues

The words, sentences, or paragraphs surrounding an unfamiliar word often provide clues to the meaning of that word. These *context clues* can help determine meaning.

Strategies

Three types of context clues are common: **definition clues**, **opposite clues**, and **substitution clues**.

1. *Look for definition clues.* An author might actually define the word in the text. Several methods may be used.
 - Words or phrases set off by commas, parentheses, or dashes:
His *sanguine*, cheerfully optimistic, attitude assures that he has a healthy outlook.
(A *sanguine* attitude is optimistic.)
This comma construction is often called an *appositive*.
 - The use of *or* or *and*:
A *florid*, or overly ornate, prose style sometimes makes points less clear.
(*Florid* is overly ornate.)
 - Defining by a list of examples:
The suborder *ophidia* includes long reptiles with scales and without arms or legs; animals in this suborder can be poisonous.
(Since these are all characteristics of snakes, *ophidia* refers to snakes.)
 - Definition by inclusion in a list of examples:
Options include a nurse, a physician, an accountant, and an *LMSW*.
(Since the other items refer to occupations, it is reasonable to assume that an *LMSW* does as well, and in fact, it is a Licensed Medical Social Worker.)
2. *Look for opposite clues.* Sometimes an author defines a word by giving its opposite.
 - The use of *not* or *no*:
Although many omens indicated that the time of the journey was not *propitious*, the ancient Romans set out on the trip anyway.
(*Propitious* means favorable.)
 - Words, phrases, or prefixes signaling opposites, such as *but*, *nevertheless*, *despite*, *rather than*, *unless*, *despite*, *although*, *in spite of*, *regardless*, *in-*, *non-*, and *un-*:
Although I found the meal *execrable*, I ate it just to be polite.
(*Execrable* means hateful; very inferior.)
Morissa seemed unfriendly, but her sister was most *congenial*.
(*Congenial* means friendly.)
 - Words with negative senses, such as *barely*, *only*, *never*, *hardly*, and *merely*:
I could barely breathe because of the *noisome* odor.
(*Noisome* means disgusting, and often harmful.)
3. *Try substituting simpler words.* The meanings of some unfamiliar words can be determined by substituting simpler words in the sentence to see if they make sense.
As the U.S. population tends to overeat and consume lots of junk food, *corpulence* has become a concern.
(*Corpulence* means the state of being overweight.)

Practice

Read each sentence to determine the meaning of the italicized word. Write the meaning you obtain from the context clues. Then look up the word in the dictionary and write the most suitable formal definition.

1. After one sailor *fomented* discontent, the others started to talk of mutiny.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. Though the times may have seemed *halcyon* to the casual observer, World War I was looming on the horizon.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. He had lost his homework, missed his bus, and was walking to school in the rain when Henry realized he had reached the *nadir* of his day.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. Where lies the final harbor, whence we *unmoor* no more? (from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*)

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. The young are *prodigal* of life from the superabundance of it. (from William Hazlitt's *The Feeling of Immortality in Youth*)

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. The *parsimonious* millionaire lived in a broken-down home, wore ragged clothes, and never went on vacations.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. What began as a minor disagreement has become a *protracted* argument lasting several years.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. The *panegyric*, a praising composition or speech, was once an important social custom.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Reading and Reasoning

Context Clues in Reading Primary Sources

As your history courses become more advanced, you will read more primary sources, or works written during the period you are studying. You have already studied some techniques for determining the meaning of unfamiliar words by using context clues. These additional strategies will help you read and understand primary sources.

Strategies

1. *Consider the date of the work.* This will alert you to the fact that some words may be used in unfamiliar ways. In the eighteenth century, for example, *enthusiasm* meant something closer to *fanaticism*.
2. *Consider the type of writing and the subject.* A personal letter will have a different level of vocabulary than a formal speech. Scientific writing and political tracts often use specific vocabulary. Keeping in mind the literary form and subject will help you make more accurate determinations of the meanings of unfamiliar words.
3. *Find out what you can about the author.* Knowing who wrote a work might provide additional clues to word meanings.
4. *Allow for unusual spellings, grammatical constructions, and punctuation.* Spelling was not standardized in the United States until the twentieth century. Remember also that universal access to education is a relatively modern phenomenon.
5. *Consult a dictionary.* If you can't figure out the meaning of a critical word, use a reference source. In some cases, a rare or obsolete word can only be found in an unabridged dictionary.

Practice

The following passage is from a journal kept by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during their heralded exploration of the American West. The passage is written by Lewis and dated April 7, 1805. Read the entire passage once to get a general idea of what it is about. Then slowly reread the passage, writing your own definition for each italicized word. Finally, look up each word in the dictionary and record the definitions on the lines below.

Our vessels consisted of six small canoes, and two large (1) *pirogues*. This little fleet altho' not quite so respectable as those of Columbus or Capt. Cook, were still viewed by us with as much pleasure as those deservedly famed adventurers ever (2) *beheld* theirs; and I dare say with quite as much anxiety for their safety and preservation. We were now about to penetrate a country at least two thousand miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never (3) *trodden*; the good or evil it had in store for us was for experiment yet to determine, and these little vessells contained every article by which we were to expect to (4) *subsist* or defend ourselves. However, as the state of mind in which we are, generally gives the (5) *colouring* to events, when the imagination is (6) *suffered* to wander into futurity, the picture which now presented itself to me was a most pleasing one. Enterta[in]ing as I do, the most confident hope of succeeding in a voyage which had formed a (7) *da[r]ling* project of mine for the

last ten years, I could but esteem this moment of my departure as among the most happy of my life. The party are in excellent health and sperits, zealously attached to the enterprise, and anxious to proceed; not a whisper or murmur or discontent to be heard among them, but all act in unison, and with the most perfect harmony. Capt. Clark myself the two Interpreters and the woman [Sacajewea] and the child sleep in a tent of dressed skins. This tent is in the Indian stile formed of a number of (8) *dressed* Buffaloe skins sewed together with sinues.

1. pirogues

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. beheld

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. trodden

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. subsist

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. colouring

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. suffered

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. da[r]ling

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. dressed

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Taking Tests

SAT Writing Tests

The new SAT, first administered in 2005, has a Writing section that includes an essay question and a set of multiple-choice questions on grammar, usage, and composition. There are three different kinds of multiple-choice questions. Each kind is described below.

Strategies

1. The **identification of sentence error** questions require you to look at four underlined parts of a sentence and determine whether one of them is faulty. First, read the entire sentence. Then reread the sentence and choose the part that has an error in grammar, usage, or syntax. (No more than one part can be incorrect.) If you find no errors, choose E.
2. **Sentence correction** items also present a sentence with underlined words. Here, your task is to choose the correct version of the underlined part in order to improve the sentence. Note that choice A is the same as the underlined version.
3. **Paragraph improvement** items present a paragraph with several sentences. Each item asks how a specific sentence or part of the paragraph can be improved. Your task is to choose the correct change needed to improve the paragraph. To answer these kinds of questions, read through the paragraph and all of the answer choices first. The key is to choose the answer that improves the paragraph without changing its meaning. Decide what the sentences mean, and then choose the answer that is best written and retains the same meaning.

Practice

In questions 1–3, choose the underlined part of the sentence that contains an error in grammar, usage, or word choice. If there is no error, choose answer E.

1. Damarcus thinks that he is older and more experienced than me.
 A B C D
No error
 E
2. Mr. Welles contacted the people whom had lived in the house
 A B C
previously. No error
 D E
3. Rosalind was convinced that the lack of sunlight effected the results
 A B C
of the experiment. No error
 D E

In questions 4–6, the underlined part of the sentence may need to be corrected. Choice A is the same as the original underlined part; the other choices are different. Choose the answer that best expresses the meaning of the original sentence.

- _____ 4. Having lived in town for years, the roads were familiar to him.
- a. the roads were familiar to him.
 - b. the roads became familiar to him.
 - c. him and the roads were familiar.
 - d. the roads to him were familiar.
 - e. he was familiar with the roads.
- _____ 5. These two movies, which are very entertaining, were directed by the same woman.
- a. which are very entertaining
 - b. which was very entertaining
 - c. who are very entertaining
 - d. which is very entertaining
 - e. that are being very entertaining
- _____ 6. The computer was invented, and many new words have been added to our language.
- a. The computer was invented, and
 - b. Then the computer was invented, and
 - c. Since the computer was invented,
 - d. Although the computer was invented,
 - e. Having invented the computer,

For questions 7–8, read the paragraph. Some parts of it need to be improved. Choose the best answer to each question about the way the paragraph is written.

(1) Some of the names given to U.S. states have fascinating origins. (2) The name California, for example, came from the name of an imaginary island in a Spanish romance novel written in 1510. (3) Maryland was named after a queen of England. (4) Virginia was also named after an English queen. (5) Georgia and Louisiana both derived from the names of kings—one English and one French. (7) Idaho, one of the most interesting names, which was supposedly invented by an early explorer. (8) It means “gem of the mountains.”

- _____ 7. Which is the best way to combine sentences 3 and 4?
- a. Maryland was named after a queen of England, and so was Virginia.
 - b. Maryland was named after a queen of England, but Virginia wasn't.
 - c. While Maryland was named after a queen of England, Virginia was, too.
 - d. Both Maryland and Virginia were named after queens of England.
 - e. Since Maryland was named after a queen of England, Virginia was, too.
- _____ 8. Which is the best version of sentence 7?
- a. Idaho, one of the most interesting names, which was supposedly invented by an early explorer.
 - b. One of the most interesting names is Idaho, which was supposedly invented by an early explorer.
 - c. Idaho, which was supposedly invented by an early explorer, one of the most interesting names.
 - d. Idaho is one of the most interesting names invented by an explorer.
 - e. Supposedly one of the most interesting names, Idaho was invented by an early explorer.

Taking Tests

Sentence Completion with Two Blanks

Standardized tests may contain sentence-completion items with either one or two blanks. You practice answering two-blank items in this book when you do the Challenge that is found in each lesson. You can apply what you have already learned about context clues to sentence-completion test items. Following these steps will help you to choose the correct answers.

Strategies

1. *Read the directions carefully.* You can lose credit if you don't follow the directions.
2. *Read the sentence completely.* Because "two-blank" items involve different parts of the sentence, it is wise to get an overview by carefully reading the entire sentence. Substitute the word *blank* for the empty spaces as you read.
3. *Look for words that fit the first blank.* To start, try to narrow your choices down to words that fit the first empty space. Make sure the word is the correct part of speech and fits in the context. Eliminate the other choices. Here is an example:

Although some of the man's most admirable traits were not addressed in the _____, why _____ with an address that was so generally excellent?

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. laudable . . . simmer | d. eulogy . . . quibble |
| b. critique . . . eradicate | e. homage . . . dissuade |
| c. myopia . . . accolade | |

By focusing on the first blank, you can eliminate choices (a) and (c); neither *laudable* nor *myopia* will fit.

4. *From the remaining choices, look for words that fit into the second blank.* Eliminate any remaining choices in which the second word doesn't fit in the second blank. In the example above, try the second word for choices (b), (d), and (e) in the second blank. You can eliminate choices (b) and (e), for the critique cannot be *eradicated*, nor can the *homage* be *dissuaded*. Only *quibble* fits. The answer is (d).
5. *Reread the sentence with your choices inserted.* Two-item tests are difficult. Make certain to check your choices. At times, a few choices may fit, and you must choose the one that fits best.

Notice that in the following example, the two missing words (which have been filled in for you) are related.

Although just about everyone was amenable to the agreement, one political party remained defiant and refused to cooperate.

The word *although* signals that the first blank and the second blank are opposites in some way. So you can check your answer by making sure that the two words you've chosen are opposing. Some other key words that might indicate a relationship include:

- *not, but, never, hardly, and in spite of* (signaling opposites)
- *and, as well as, or in addition to* (signaling agreement)

Practice

Each sentence below has two blanks, each blank indicating that something has been omitted. Beneath the sentence are five lettered sets of words labeled a through e. Choose the word or set of words that, when inserted in the sentence, *best* fits the meaning of the sentence as a whole.

- _____ 1. As he once again prepared to meet his _____ in the debate, he devised arguments that he hoped would _____ his opponent's points.
a. detractor ... extract d. nemesis ... refute
b. official ... detract e. epicure ... mar
c. raconteur ... cease
- _____ 2. When the student asked for his coach's _____ opinion of his performance in the game, the coach admitted that it was only _____.
a. candid ... mediocre d. judicious ... gloat
b. outspoken ... retracted e. humble ... obstructed
c. disinterested ... laudable
- _____ 3. The tentative statements of the _____ first-year students contrasted with the _____ pronouncements of their overconfident leader.
a. swaggering ... efficacious d. convoluted ... egocentric
b. diffident ... pompous e. modest ... oblivious
c. intricate ... infirm
- _____ 4. Once feared for its _____, tuberculosis is now considered a(n) _____ that can be controlled through the appropriate use of antibiotics.
a. pallor ... munificence d. susceptibility ... deterrence
b. notoriety ... infirmity e. virulence ... malady
c. prognosis ... reverie
- _____ 5. Jerome's reading of the seventeenth-century journal entries was _____ by the _____ language.
a. obstructed ... error d. scuttled ... prototype
b. hampered ... archaic e. obstructed ... standard
c. commenced ... semantic
- _____ 6. The child was _____ enough to believe the most fantastic story that was _____ by those who sought to have fun at her expense.
a. hypocritical ... masqueraded d. duplicitous ... envisioned
b. guileless ... verified e. astute ... broached
c. gullible ... generated
- _____ 7. Frankly, our hunger _____ from our politeness, so with barely a word, we rushed to _____ the savory morsels that were awaiting us.
a. detracted ... devour d. dissuaded ... obliterate
b. retracted ... quaff e. procrastinated ... deliberations
c. extracted ... simmer
- _____ 8. Apprehensive and _____ by thoughts of the upcoming test, she simply wasn't _____ to the prospect of attending the play, no matter how entertaining it promised to be.
a. refuted ... pulverized d. baffled ... discerning
b. preoccupied ... receptive e. eradicated ... heedless
c. reproached ... overt

Taking Tests

SAT Critical Reading Tests

The new SAT, first administered in 2005, has a Critical Reading section that presents both short and long reading passages, each of them followed by multiple-choice questions. The strategies below can help you answer such questions successfully.

Strategies

1. *Scan the passage and the test items first.* This will enable you to look for specific information as you read.
2. *Read at an appropriate rate.* Read through the passage once to get the overall idea. Then reread it again slowly to make sure you understand it.
3. *Determine the main idea as you read.* The main idea may or may not be directly stated in the passage, but identifying it is critical to understanding what you read.
4. *Identify supporting details.* Details that support main points are often queried in test items.
5. *Be prepared to make inferences and draw conclusions.* These may involve making predictions or generalizations based on what you have read, or drawing logical conclusions from the information provided.
6. *Be prepared to make judgments.* Critical reading involves making evaluative judgments about ideas; fact and opinions; or an author's attitude, style, or tone.
7. *Refer to the passage to find information.* You do not need to memorize information from the passage, since you may go back to it if necessary.

Practice

Read the following passage. Answer the questions based on what is stated or implied in the passage. For each question, choose the best answer and write the letter of the answer you choose in the space provided.

Most people, if asked to list the rights conferred by U.S. citizenship, would place the right to vote high on their list. Yet approximately five million U.S. citizens are not eligible to vote in federal elections, and thus cannot enjoy full and equal participation in the nation's political life. How can this possibly be fair?

In addition to the 48 contiguous states plus Alaska and Hawaii, the United States includes several overseas dependencies. Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa are designated as territories of the United States, while Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands are U.S. Commonwealths. With minor exceptions, residents of all of these islands are U.S. citizens at birth, but they do not have the right to vote in national elections. Any of these residents who moved to one of the 50 states, however, would be entitled to all of the same rights enjoyed by any state resident, including the right to vote in national elections.

To understand what is responsible for this anomaly, it is necessary to review the U.S. Constitution—the document that defines the powers of our state and national governments. As currently interpreted, the Constitution stipulates that only a U.S. citizen residing in a *state* is eligible to vote for presidents, senators, and congressional representatives. Thus, citizens who reside in places other than the 50 states are

not eligible to vote for these national offices. (For the same reason, residents of Washington, D.C., still do not have voting representation in Congress. However, in 1963, the Twenty-third Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, allowing District residents to vote for president and vice president.)

Despite the inequality in voting rights, the territories and commonwealths derive many benefits from their relationship with the United States. Foremost is the granting of U.S. citizenship and nationality. Also important are guarantees of fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of speech and religion. Each of the territories and commonwealths has the right to local self-government, and elects its own governor and legislature. All benefit from trade advantages, direct economic assistance, and favorable tax treatment.

The relationship between the United States and most of its overseas dependencies is not likely to change much in the foreseeable future. Many of the dependencies are significantly smaller than the smallest state. None of them has a viable political movement in favor of statehood. Puerto Rico, on the other hand, has a larger population than 24 of the 50 states and more land than Delaware and Rhode Island. In 1998, exactly 100 years after Spain ceded Puerto Rico to the United States, a referendum indicated that 46.5% of the island's voters were in favor of statehood. Perhaps one day Puerto Rico will become the 51st state; if so, its citizens will become full and equal participants in the political life of the nation.

1. Which sentence best states the author's main point in this passage?
 - a. Of all U.S. dependencies, the one most likely to become a state is Puerto Rico.
 - b. There is a problem with the Constitution of the United States.
 - c. Citizens living in U.S. dependencies cannot vote in national elections.
 - d. Full political participation must always include the right to vote.
 - e. U.S. citizenship benefits residents of the nation's overseas dependencies.
2. In the phrase "To understand what is responsible for this *anomaly*," the word *anomaly* means
 - a. terrible situation.
 - b. something mentioned previously.
 - c. deviation from the rule.
 - d. unavoidable error.
 - e. political climate.
3. From the information given in this passage, you can conclude that residents of U.S. dependencies
 - a. hope to bring their families to one of the 50 states.
 - b. are all unhappy with current U.S. voting eligibility requirements.
 - c. except Puerto Rico want to gain the right to vote in any election.
 - d. are not interested in politics.
 - e. could be granted the right to vote in national elections by a Constitutional amendment.
4. What is probably the most important reason for the author's contention that Puerto Rico may one day become a state?
 - a. Almost half of its citizens have shown an interest in becoming a state.
 - b. It has a large population.
 - c. It is closer to the North American mainland than any of the other U.S. dependencies.
 - d. It has a land area that is actually larger than some states.
 - e. The United States already has one island state (Hawaii) and two states that do not border the other 48 states (Hawaii and Alaska).

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

The Prefixes *inter-*, *intra-*, and *intro-*

When added to a Latin combining root or a base word, the prefixes *inter-*, *intra-*, and *intro-* form words that reflect the meanings of their word parts. Recall that a *prefix* is a word part that attaches to the beginning of the main word and a *root* is the main word part.

The meaning of each of these prefixes is given in the table below, along with an example. The meaning of *extra-* (sometimes spelled *extro-*), which contrasts with *intro-*, is also given.

Prefix	Prefix Meaning	Root	Word	Word Meaning
inter-	between, among	cellular	intercellular	between, among cells
intra-	within	cellular	intracellular	within a cell
intro-	in; inward	-vert- (turn)	introvert	a private person; turned inward
extra-	beyond; outside	galactic	extragalactic	beyond or outside the galaxy

You can use your knowledge of prefixes to help you understand unknown words, but remember that this process may only hint at a word's meaning, rather than resulting in a literal meaning. But you can combine this information with the context of a sentence to formulate a possible definition for the unknown word. Then you can ensure the accuracy of a definition by checking it in the dictionary.

Practice

You can combine the use of context clues with your knowledge of these prefixes to make intelligent guesses about the meanings of words. Each of the sentences below contains a word formed with the prefix *inter-*, *intra-*, or *intro-*. Read each sentence and try to infer what the word in *italics* means. Then check your definition with the one that you find in the dictionary, remembering to choose the definition that best fits in the sentence.

1. Since she could not eat while in the hospital, she was given nutrients *intravenously*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. The results of the *intramural* tennis competitions at the University of Michigan determined which of its teams would compete with other universities.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. The official's timely *intervention* in the argument prevented it from turning into a brawl.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. The patient's *intracranial* activity was monitored by special equipment.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. The tedium of the long lecture was broken when a student *interjected* a joke.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. Occasionally, Carmen liked to take time out of her daily routines for *introspection* about her life goals.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. The rows of corn were *interspersed* with rows of bean.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. Science-fiction movies often show *intragalactic* travel.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

9. The physicist studied *intramolecular* forces.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

10. The *introrse* anthers of the lily faced its stem.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

11. An insect can crawl into the smallest *interstice*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

12. At the *interurban* conference, the mayors discussed solutions to housing problems.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

The Prefixes *ambi-* and *para-*

The prefixes in this feature deal with location. *Ambi-*, from Latin, means “around” or “both.” The common word *ambition* came from the Roman practice of going around to campaign, or ask for votes. *Para-*, from Greek, means “beside.” For example, at one time, *paragraph* marks were put beside the writing (graph). *Para-* can also mean “similar to,” “beyond,” or “assistant to.”

Prefix	Prefix Meaning	Word	Word Meaning
ambi-	around, both	ambidextrous	using both hands
para-	beside, similar to	paralegal	a person assisting a lawyer

Practice

You can combine the use of context clues with your knowledge of these prefixes to make intelligent guesses about the meanings of words. Each of the sentences below contains a word formed with the prefix *ambi-* or *para-*. Read each sentence and try to infer what the word in *italics* means. Then check your definition with the one that you find in the dictionary, remembering to choose the definition that best fits in the sentence.

1. The directions we had were *ambiguous*, so we didn't know where to take our next turn.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. *Paralinguistic* phenomena, such as pauses and tone of voice during speech, communicate many messages.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. After having spent several months in bed, it was good to see that Sergei was *ambulatory* once again.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. The use of fictionalized *parajournalism* disturbs some critics, but others feel that it is a healthy, creative outlet.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. *Paranormal* phenomena, such as ghostly voices, have been discredited.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. Shannon felt *ambivalent* about going on the roller coaster ride, and missed out while she was trying to decide.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. With its soft music, beautiful décor, and candlelight, the restaurant's *ambiance* was lovely.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. Those lines are *parallel* and will never intersect.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

9. Certain worms are *parasites* that can lodge within human organs and then feed off the organs.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Review Word Elements

Reviewing word elements helps you to remember them and use them in your reading. Below, write the meanings of the word elements you have studied.

Word	Word Element	Type of Element	Meaning of Word Element
spectator	<i>spec</i>	root	_____
interact	<i>inter-</i>	prefix	_____
pliant	<i>pli</i>	root	_____
intramural	<i>intra-</i>	prefix	_____
fidelity	<i>fid</i>	root	_____
jurisdiction	<i>jur</i>	root	_____

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

The Word Elements *astro-*, *geo-*, *hydro-*, *-mar-*, and *-terra-*

The five word elements in this feature deal with natural physical features. *Astro-*, *geo-*, and *hydro-* come from Greek. Each one can be used as a prefix or as a root. The roots *-mar-* and *-terra-* come from Latin. The meanings of each element are given in the table below.

Element	Type	Meaning	Word	Word Meaning
astro-, astro	prefix, root	star	astronomy	the study of outer space
geo-, geo	prefix, root	earth	geography	the study of Earth's features
hydro-, hydro	prefix, root	water	hydroelectric	generating electricity using water
mar	root	sea	mariner	one who navigates a ship
terra	root	earth	territory	land

Practice

You can combine the use of context clues with your knowledge of these word elements to make intelligent guesses about meanings. Each of the sentences below contains a word formed with the word element *astro*, *geo*, *hydro*, *mar*, or *terra*. Read each sentence and try to infer what the word in italics means. Then check your definition with the one you find in the dictionary, remembering to choose the definition that best fits in the sentence.

1. After suffering from seasickness for the entire week of our voyage, I was glad to be back on *terra firma*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. *Submarine* warfare was an important element of World War II.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. Sailors in the time of Columbus often relied on *astronavigation*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. He is a specialist in *geophysics*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. The specialists in *hydrobiology* took samples from the pond at regular intervals.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. It was difficult to travel through the mountainous *terrain*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. A *maritime* code deals with commerce conducted on the ocean.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. The *hydrofoil* skimmed the surface.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Review Word Elements

Reviewing word elements helps you to remember them and use them in your reading. Below, write the meanings of the word elements you have studied.

Word	Word Element	Type of Element	Meaning of Word Element
ambivalent	<i>ambi-</i>	prefix	_____
sagacity	<i>sag</i>	root	_____
congregate	<i>greg</i>	root	_____
parallel	<i>para-</i>	prefix	_____
valiant	<i>val</i>	root	_____
adhere	<i>here</i>	root	_____
inquisitive	<i>quisit</i>	root	_____
invincible	<i>vinc, vince</i>	root	_____
dissimulate	<i>sim</i>	root	_____
interrogate	<i>rog</i>	root	_____
fidelity	<i>fid</i>	root	_____
spectacles	<i>spec, spect</i>	root	_____
pliant	<i>pli</i>	root	_____

Prefixes, Roots, and Suffixes

The Prefixes *pan-*, *extra-*, *ultra-*, and *omni-*

The prefixes in this feature deal with aspects of plenty. *Pan-* comes from Greek and *omni-* comes from Latin. Both mean "all." *Extra-*, from Latin, and *ultra-*, from French, both mean "beyond." The table below details their uses.

Element	Prefix Meaning	Word	Word Meaning
<i>pan-</i>	all	<i>panhuman</i>	referring to all of humanity
<i>extra-</i>	beyond, outside	<i>extragalactic</i>	beyond, outside of the galaxy
<i>ultra-</i>	beyond	<i>ultraconservative</i>	beyond conservative
<i>omni-</i>	all	<i>omnipotent</i>	all powerful

Practice

You can combine the use of context clues with your knowledge of these word elements to make intelligent guesses about word meanings. Each of the sentences below contains a word formed with the prefix *pan-*, *extra-*, *ultra-*, or *omni-*. Read each sentence and try to infer what the word in *italics* means. Then check your definition with the one you find in the dictionary, remembering to choose the definition that best fits in the sentence.

1. Dog's ears are sensitive to *ultrasonic* noises that humans cannot hear.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

2. We should all seek to avoid things that are *extralegal*.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

3. Oxygen is *omnipresent* in Earth's atmosphere.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

4. What types of *extracurricular* activities interest you?

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

5. The *ultramicroscope* gave astonishing images.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

6. This *panchromatic* film will show the flowers' colors with great accuracy.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

7. I found it hard to sit in the *ultramodern* chair.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

8. The U.S. Attorney General instituted *extradition* proceedings against the criminal who fled to Colombia.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

9. He was an *omnivorous* reader who read everything he could find.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

10. A shout of "Fire" started *pandemonium* in the theater.

My definition _____

Dictionary definition _____

Review Word Elements

Reviewing word elements helps you to remember them and use them in your reading. Below, write the meanings of the word elements you have studied.

Word	Word Element	Type of Element	Meaning of Word Element
astronaut	<i>astro-</i>	prefix	_____
presage	<i>sag</i>	root	_____
dissimulate	<i>sim</i>	root	_____
gregarious	<i>greg</i>	root	_____
geometry	<i>geo-</i>	prefix	_____
countervailing	<i>val</i>	root	_____
maritime	<i>mar</i>	root	_____
inquisitive	<i>quisit</i>	root	_____
vanquish	<i>vinc</i>	root	_____
interrogate	<i>rog</i>	root	_____
hydroelectric	<i>hydro-</i>	prefix	_____
terra firma	<i>terra</i>	root	_____
cohere	<i>here</i>	root	_____
fidelity	<i>fid</i>	root	_____
spectacles	<i>spec</i>	root	_____
pliant	<i>pli</i>	root	_____